



Representative Mitzi Johnson
Speaker of the House

Katherine Levasseur
Chief of Staff

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May 24, 2019 10:25am

Dear Senator Ashe,

Thank you for the time you've invested in working towards agreement on two critical bills for the well-being of Vermonters, namely Minimum Wage and Paid Family Leave.

At this point, we seem to be at impasse.

In the discussions around minimum wage, the only two proposals you've put on the table are ones passed by the Senate: \$12.50 in 2 years, or the first two years of your original proposal, \$12.25 in 2 years. The House is not interested in accepting your version of minimum wage while making a significant concession on Paid Family Leave, specifically losing safeguards for all working Vermonters when they need to take time off for their own serious illness or injury. As I have repeatedly expressed, many House members are concerned about the effects of a steep minimum wage increase on small rural businesses and on the potential loss of services to Vermonters dependent on community agencies funded largely by Medicaid and Medicare. You have not addressed those concerns in your proposals. We have heard your concerns about the cost of the Paid Family Leave program passed by the House, and under certain circumstances, are willing to make a significant compromise in the TDI portion. I think we do have a point of agreement on the number of weeks for parental or family leave which adds minimal cost to address Senate priorities, but adds significant supports for Vermonters, to meet House priorities.

We are open to any of the following true compromise which we've put on the table in the past few days. Any one of these are packages that raise wages, support families, and meet the concerns and priorities of each of our bodies are acceptable options to bring to our members. In no particular order, they are:

- The House passed minimum wage bill with a compromise paid family leave program that includes 12 weeks parental leave per worker, 8 weeks family medical leave per worker, 6 weeks of voluntary TDI
- Minimum wage at \$12.00 in two years, with a compromise paid family leave program that includes 12 weeks parental leave per worker, 8 weeks family medical leave per worker, 6 weeks of voluntary TDI
- Minimum wage at \$12.15 in two years, with a compromise paid family leave program that includes 12 weeks parental leave per worker, 8 weeks family medical leave per worker, 6 weeks of voluntary TDI
- Minimum wage at \$12.25 in two years, which is the original Senate-passed rate of increase, with a compromise paid family leave program that includes 12 weeks parental leave per worker, 8 weeks family medical leave per worker, 6 weeks of voluntary TDI for 3 years, becoming mandatory in 2023.



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- Minimum wage at \$12.25 in two years, which is the original Senate-passed rate of increase, with a compromise paid family leave program that includes 12 weeks parental leave per worker, 8 weeks family medical leave per worker, 6 weeks of mandatory TDI.

Given the late date and upcoming holiday weekend, we need a decision by noon today on which one of these proposals you accept. If none are acceptable, please pass and message S.162 with its agreed-upon amendments and the Committee of Conference reports on H.132, H.542, and H.541 by noon.

It's time to wrap up and go home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitzi J".

Mitzi Johnson
Speaker of the House
Vermont House of Representatives